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E.O. 12958: DECL: 4/25/2018
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [ASEC](#) [TT](#)
SUBJECT: SALSINHA REPORTEDLY SURRENDERS

CLASSIFIED BY: Henry M. Rector, Deputy Chief of Mission, U.S.
Embassy Dili, Department of State.
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (SBU) On the morning of Friday, April 25 Lieutenant Gastao Salsinha, surviving leader of the perpetrators of the February 11 assassination attempts against Timor-Leste President Ramos-Horta and Prime Minister Xanana Gusmao, reportedly turned himself into authorities in the village of Lauana, Ermera District. Details remain sketchy, and it is unclear whether he turned himself in to police, armed forces, or the President's representatives. The surrender was facilitated by members of the Center for Humanitarian Dialogue (CHD), an NGO that has been advising the GOTL on this problem, and Presidential Advisor Alex Tilman. Speaker of Parliament Fernando "Lasama" de Araujo has reportedly been engaged in an intensive dialogue with Salsinha over the past several days, and Prime Minister Xanana Gusmao recently stipulated that Salsinha must be taken alive in order to account for his actions, including an explanation of backing he may have received from Timorese and/or foreign sources.

¶2. (SBU) According to a CHD staffer, Salsinha will remain in Ermera to help arrange the surrender of seven of his followers still at large. Salsinha will be brought to Dili on April 28. The commander of Timor-Leste's armed forces, Brigadier Taur Matan Ruak, roughly confirmed the above in an April 25 meeting with Ambassador, although some of the details differed and the end of the stalemate was described in aspirational rather than definite terms.

¶3. (C) Comment. Assuming this does not somehow unravel in the coming days, Salsinha's reported surrender brings to a close a traumatic episode that has complicated the GOTL's efforts to resolve other pressing issues such as resettlement of the internally displaced persons (IDPs) and reaching an accord with the ex-military petitioners. His surrender may have a positive impact on the latter problem in particular, since Salsinha and his late former leader Major Alfredo Reinado had styled themselves as advocates for the petitioners. However, some important aspects of the situation remain to be addressed, obviously including the GOTL's approach to prosecuting Salsinha and his men. The timing of Salsinha's surrender followed President Ramos-Horta's return to Timor-Leste, and the President may face pressure to reward Salsinha with lenience as a reward for turning himself in without resorting to violence, although Ramos-Horta has only stated that Salsinha will be accorded the

full protections of law as would any other citizen.
Constitutional constraints on the President's authority and
Ramos-Horta's past statements on this subject will not prevent
discussion of this contingency.
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